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#### MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

**A** RETROSPECTIVE view of the political state of foreign nations during the last month, does not present any thing new to gratify the curious, but affords abundant matter for reflection to the attentive observer. The prostration of Sweden and Austria before their powerful invaders, was already obvious, and the treaties of Vienna and Friedricksham only brought to light the precise manner in which their humiliation and insignificance was to be completed, and themselves rendered henceforth of no weight or estimation in the general polity of Europe. The delay which took place in finally concluding the peace with Francis, and which many seemed willing to ascribe to the mental or physical inability of Bonaparte, seems to have been owing to that profound and comprehensive policy which has distinguished the latter since the commencement of his career, by which he has been enabled to acquire the most important advantages without exciting the fears, or alarming the jealousy of his

BELFAST MAG. NO. XVI.

imperial ally, and to extinguish the power of his enemy, and yet leave him apparently a powerful monarch, in possession of an immense territory. Shall we continue to flatter ourselves that he will display less ability in the subjugation of Spain and Portugal, and annihilating the Turkish empire, than he has done in all his former proceedings? or, that the hand of Providence will be mysteriously exerted to arrest the progress of wisdom and prudence in behalf of every imbecility that can mark the human character! A people, that, with such experience before them, will yet go on expecting security, without adopting any of the measures that lead to its attainment, certainly deserve the worst consequences that can ensue from their folly. We have not the smallest doubt but that the power of these countries if properly called forth and directed, is fully sufficient for every purpose of defence, and on this ground, we have been, and are still the strenuous advocates for a termination being put to the accumulation

ing miseries of a war without any possible object; but when we see this power divided, weakened, dissipated, and the people still silent, we cannot conceal our apprehension that such strange indifference may lead, to the most disastrous consequences. Our almost only hope arises from a prospect of the extremity to which we will shortly be reduced; when the ports of the Baltic are closed against our commerce, and America drawn into the vortex of hostility against our naval and commercial pre-eminence, the pressure which will then be *felt*, and the embarrassment which will take place in our pecuniary resources must rouse the country, and compel a system to be embraced and acted on, which may yet rescue the nation from ruin. With these hopes we can contemplate the divisions of a cabinet, and the immense and encreasing power of an enemy without despondence; neither indignant at the degraded state of the country, because merited, which suffers its honour and dearest interests to be compromised by the one, nor too much terrified at the imposing attitude of the other. We think a bright day will yet arise—but, the night may be gloomy and dreadful! *could* the people be brought to consider in time, all these apprehended horrors might be averted; a beneficial change might be wrought in our situation without any of those concomitant evils which have desolated the Continental kingdoms, and a mild and placid evening usher in all the delights of a vernal morn.

## ENGLAND.

" Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;  
Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,  
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;  
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.  
The times are altered: trade's unfeeling train,  
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain.  
Along the lawn where scattered hamlets rose,  
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose.

And ev'ry want to luxury allied,  
And ev'ry pang that folly pays to pride.  
Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen, who survey  
The rich man's joys increase—the poor's decay,  
'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand,  
Between a splendid and a happy land.  
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,  
And shouting folly hails them from her shore;  
Hoards, even beyond the miser's wish, abound,  
And rich men flock from all the world around;  
Yet count their gains. This wealth is but a name,  
That leaves our useful products still the same.  
Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride  
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;  
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,  
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds.  
The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth,  
Has robb'd the neighb'ring fields of half their growth.  
His seat, where solitary sports are seen,  
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;  
Around the world each needful product flies,  
For all the luxuries the world supplies.  
Thus while the land adorn'd for pleasure all  
In barren splendour sееbly waits the fall.  
Thus verging to decline, its splendours rise,  
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprize;  
While, scourged by famine from the smiling land,  
The mournful peasant leads his humble band;  
And while he sinks, without one arm to save,  
The country blooms—a garden and a grave.  
Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,  
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade;  
Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomp display,  
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.  
The dome where pleasure holds her midnight reign,  
Here, richly deck'd, admits the gorgeous train;

Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing  
 square,  
 The rattling chariots clash, the torches  
 glare.  
 Aid, slighted Truth, with thy persuasive  
 strain;  
 Teach erring man to spurn the rage of  
 gain;  
 Teach him, that states of native strength  
 possess'd,  
 Tho' very poor, may still be very bless'd;  
 That trade's proud empire hastes to swift  
 decay,  
 As oceans sweep the labour'd mole away;  
 While self-dependent power can time  
 defy,  
 As rocks resist the billows and the sky."

So sweetly sung the tuneful Goldsmith, in strains appropriate to the present times. The noble and independent sentiments displayed in his Traveller, require to be recalled to public attention, and form our apology for giving so long an extract from so well known an author. Indeed, in these times, when independence is much out of fashion, and wealth and power are so generally worshiped, a recurrence to the writings of the poets and authors of former days, may be useful to counteract the present tendency. We therefore recommend to our readers who have not lately read Goldsmith's Deserted Village, and his Traveller, to refresh their memories, and brace their minds to a higher tone, by the perusal of these excellent poems, in which honest independence is recommended in smooth and harmonious strains.

In England, civilization is so far advanced, as to be likely to approach to the opposite side of the circle, and to endanger the destruction of the comforts of the many, to aid the wealth of the few.

In Ireland, we are not so far advanced; we have yet to establish a substantial peasantry; while in England they are in danger of losing this best prop to a state, by the progress of luxury and wealth. That class of men formerly known by the name of country gentlemen, comprizing the landed proprietors of smaller properties, is melting away before the commercial aristocracy, of which the merchants, bankers and traders at Lloyds, are the representatives, and whose ascendancy in the state and in parlia-

ment is rapidly rivalling the higher orders of the old landed aristocracy. But "these may flourish or may fade," while the real cause for regret lies in the decay of the middle classes of society from among whom a few draw large prizes in the lottery of life, and mount to the higher grades but the greater number are forced by the pressure of the times to descend to the rank next below them, and so on through the different gradations of society.

As a set off against the mania of the jubilee, and a fact more descriptive of the real situation of the country, we may be allowed to state, that in the opulent parish of Hampstead, the residence of our prime minister, a subscription was raised to treat such of the inhabitants as would accept of it, to a public dinner on the day of the Jubilee, when one half of the parish submitted to be treated. This fact at once shows the poverty of the people, and the decline of that spirit of independence, which is the best bulwark of a nation; for this spirit of independence, not the the chivalry of the pensioned Burke, is indeed, "the cheap and unbought defence of nations." The Jubilee is gone by: stunned and confused by its uproar, the people have neglected the important duty of examining into their critical situation: so far it has answered the end for which it was designed: but reiterated disasters will probably again and again recal a people unwilling to see their state, to more deep reflection. The plan to release insolvent debtors so far as it went, was probably in many instances a measure of just retribution: as it is likely that in many instances the number of insolvent debtors has been greatly increased by the pressure arising from the destructive wars carried on during the present reign. In the excellent parallel between Alexander and Bagshot, by the pen of Hawksworth, Bagshot threw back a shilling to pay the turnpike, to the man whom he had robbed, and whose son he had killed.

If it were the aim of governments to promote the interests of the people, as much as to gratify their own ambitious and interested views, we

should behold a new era, in which the people would have no need to have any largess doled out to them. Donatives characterized the worst period of the Roman Empire.

In London there has been a dinner to celebrate the anniversary of the acquittal of Hardy, Tooke, Thelwall, and others in 1794, on a charge of high treason, for advocating the cause of reform. The English manage most of their affairs by dinners. They have cabinet dinners, and opposition dinners, jubilee dinners to show loyalty, and commemoration dinners to display patriotism. The affairs of parishes, are settled at dinners, and of late dinners for disseminating certain religious opinions are becoming fashionable. In the present case, if eating can be made to inspire patriotism, we do not object. The noble display of firmness by a British jury saved the almost expiring liberties of the country. The ministry of that day, at the head of which were Pitt and Richmond, who had themselves mounted to power through affecting to promote the cause of the people, were resolved to crush reform, by exercising "*a vigour beyond the law*," and the prosecution of these men was one of their most prominent schemes.

By such means was public spirit broken down at that day, for few notwithstanding the acquittal of these men, wished to undergo similar hardships, and to this cause may be attributed much of the supineness, and acquiescence in public measures which has since enabled ministers to triumph over the public spirit of the nation.

The state of things however, would have been much worse at this day, if this plot against liberty had not been happily frustrated. The transaction deserves to be held in remembrance.\*

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\* The hardships which these men underwent were great, although their innocence was pronounced by a verdict of their country. Many others were arraigned but the want of success in the first instances prevented their trials being proceeded on. Yet they had incurred the charges of defending themselves against the prosecution. A benevolent mind cannot but feel for the hardships

It is related that an old foreign statesman grown hoary in the ways of court intrigue, sent his son to a congress of ministers in Germany, to settle some plan of pacification. The youth with

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of their cases after the lapse of so many years. Thomas Holcroft one of the sufferers, but who was not brought to trial, thus feelingly describes his situation, in the plan of defence submitted by him to his counsel, Erskine and Gibbs.

"This strange charge, Gentlemen, has brought upon me the consequences I have stated. Torn from my family, my literary labours suspended, my body imprisoned, my life threatened, and every exertion called forth lest it should be lost by false accusation, my usual resources of subsistence were instantly swept away; for I have no resources, nor ever had, nor ever wish to have, but by my labours.

"The moment when by the operation of the indictment found against me, the evils I have stated befel me, was the most fatal that in my case could have happened. It was when I had two pressing works to engage in and complete for the season of exhibition and publication. This season is come, I am wholly unprepared, my time must still be engrossed by endeavours to wipe away the aspersions that have been cast upon my character and the means of support for my family, for I know not how long are gone.

"To these evils are added the law-expenses of this prosecution; and think gentlemen, what these must be, where two lists were given me of jurors and witnesses, amounting to 436 persons—whose characters, passions, and prejudices, the Solicitor and Counsel for the defence had to examine through channels the most numerous and intricate, before they could be satisfied that the lives of the accused might not fall a sacrifice of mistake or perjury. I and my fellow sufferers were not wallowing in affluence; we could not give 8400*l.* to our counsel with their briefs; the counsel for the crown had this sum;—nor expend thousands, and hundreds of thousands in our defence. We had no national treasury to draw upon. Alas! we had the wealth of the nation, and the prejudices of the nation, and the power of the nation, to encounter. By what miracle could we escape? The innocence of those men must be evident indeed, that could endure such an inquest, and withstand such an assault."

modest diffidence distrusted his own powers, but his father to remove his bashfulness, replied, with a thorough knowledge of the talents of the statesmen of those days, with whom he had associated; "Go, my son, and see with how little abilities the concerns of states are managed." What is viewed at a distance is frequently considered as magnificent, but a nearer and a more accurate inspection dissipates the illusion. So with the present administration, and the views of their system, which they, themselves, from their squabbles, have happily communicated to the public, by which the people may be instructed, if they do not throw away the opportunity. Of administration, we may say, in a parody on Cowley.

"The feeble cab'net, battered and decay'd,  
"Lies in new light, through chinks which time has made."

The late scramble for places has still farther aggravated the evils of the ill concerted, and ill executed armament against Walcheren, and the army has been suffered to waste by sickness, and eventually to become liable to a powerful attack from the French, while the domestic contest has been unremittingly continued for places.

The country is virtually without an efficient administration. At home all is in fluctuation, and their foreign diplomatic agents are in some instances ill-chosen. In America we perceive that a strong prejudice exists against the new ambassador from this country, whom they designate by the name of Copenhagen Jackson, on account of the share he had in the disgraceful transaction at that capital. We are thus furnished with another proof of the manner in which the attack on the unoffending Danes is considered by foreign nations. We fear it will be a long time before the British nation will recover its character for honour. We are not inclined by any means to defend the usurpations of Bonaparte, but we feel more peculiarly hurt at the violation of honour in this case, as coming closer home to ourselves, and as if to a certain degree, we and the nation in general were identified in the crime. On this account we have more than once in these retrospects alluded to the

transaction, with feelings approaching to a sense of national debasement.

The idol of war has its votaries in all countries, and hostile nations, who may almost be said to have no other common sentiment, join in praises of this destructive demon! We are told by a late historian of the war in Spain, that such sentiments as the following are common in the French journals. "War is the lot of mankind, it has been, it is now, and ever will be, the principal occupation of states and powers: therefore God created human beings for the purpose of massacring each other: and the man of letters, who endeavours to persuade us, that war may very frequently be avoided, is a poor hair-brained visionary, whose folly we deplore, but whose ill-timed philanthropy is dangerous." We have heard many philippics against French philosophy, but surely genuine philosophy disavows such atrocious doctrines. How often have our ears been stunned, and our feelings shocked, by a repetition of such sentiments at home! We need not travel far to reprobate such philosophy. Vice and folly are not solely privileged in one country, they have their shameless advocates in all! Many arguing from what is, instead of from what ought to be, form most erroneous conclusions, and attribute the effects of their own passions to the natural constitution of man. But the philanthropist cannot relinquish the pleasing consoling expectation, that an amended ameliorated order of things will yet take place in this confused distracted world.

A perusal of the 51st of Dr. Neale's Letters from Portugal and Spain describing the miseries of the retreat of the English Army previous to the battle of Corunna might stagger the stoutest advocates for war, and rouse the latent sensibilities of the coldest breast to feel for the woes of suffering humanity, in the most aggravated forms of famine, fatigue, and disease. We shall give a short extract. Dr. Johnson justly denominated history "the annals of blood." "It was with the greatest difficulty I could keep my seat on horseback. Every human being had fled: 'the fenceless villages were all forsaken.' Our soldiers absolutely lay down and died in the

ditches without a struggle. Few women were now to be seen, the greater part had perished, or fallen behind between Villa Franca and Lugo.

"The troops had some salt beef and rum issued. Not having any fires to cook the beef, much of it was thrown away: but the rum was drunk greedily; and the power of their stomachs being almost gone, I saw many fall down, after drinking it in a comatose state. Death, I have no doubt, followed in an hour or two. Hundreds of men and officers came into Betanzos barefooted, their feet swelled and frost bitten, and the flesh torn and bleeding by the granite and quartz pebbles!! Let us, putting ourselves in the stead of these sufferers, contemplate in idea these scenes. Serious reflection can scarcely fail to produce salutary effects and wean us from the epidemic fondness for war.

From the late proceedings at law, we have a probability that Colonel Wardle will bring forth his character undiminished from the rude assaying to which it has been subjected notwithstanding the chicanery of the opposite council. Although the motion for a new trial was refused on a point of law, we trust the trial of the Wrights and their associates for the conspiracy will further elucidate this business and do justice to the character of the Colonel. We do not wonder that the satellites of power, that place men and pensioners, should vilify him. They may be allowed to shew an antipathy to the detector of their schemes. But that the people, in whose cause he has stepped forward as a champion, and on that account drawn on himself much odium, should so readily join in the outcry against him augurs unfavourably of the state of public opinion, and shews an apathy towards their defender unworthy of a free people. If he have some improprieties of his youthful conduct in Ireland to atone for, actions which if they do not admit an excuse, at least receive some palliation, from his acting with a body not famed for discipline, he may still be allowed in his riper years to make a recompence for his early errors. A generous nation should forgive, more especially as his share

in the transactions remains yet unaccounted for, how far his personal individual character was involved in the proceedings of the Ancient Britons in Ireland.

"The licence without the freedom of democracy" is still continued at the Covent Garden theatre. Without entering further into the merits of the question, we may be allowed to remark, that so much of public attention being given to a subject of such trivial importance, when compared with the awfully momentous concerns of the present period, shews in a strong view the low state of public feeling in the British capital.

#### IRELAND.

We are pleased to observe that the Duke of Richmond in his late southern tour took occasion to manifest a disposition averse from religious bigotry, and a wish to conciliate the Catholics. Such conduct is deserving of praise, but the privileges of a people should not depend on the personal character or urbanity of a governor. The Catholics are busily occupied in preparing their petitions to both houses of parliament, for the restoration of the privileges which are yet withheld from their body. We heartily wish success to their exertions. As friends to the equal rights of all, and disapproving of Protestant ascendancy or Catholic ascendancy, we are advocates for their complete emancipation, and the abandonment of all disqualifications on account of religion; and of this principle the justice applies whether five, or five millions are concerned—The free exercise of religious opinions is not a question of numbers, but of sound policy. We wish that the national character may be ameliorated by an increasing liberality on all sides, and every distinction may be merged into that of a peaceable citizen of a truly free state. Such a consummation is an object of sincere and ardent desire.

All dominant religions have persecuted in their turn, and called in the aid of the civil power. History affords innumerable instances of Catholics and Protestants each in their turn, assuming that the doctrines of the others were dangerous to the state: a stale pretext by which in-

tolerance has masked its overbearing designs. A complete toleration liberally and *unconditionally* bestowed, is the most effectual means of removing the dangers arising from opposing sects. Intolerance on the part of the established sect produces a reaction from the others, and thus religious feuds become dangerous to the peace of a state, while if only a wise forbearance is practised, diversity of sentiment on the subject of religion does not interrupt the general harmony. Controul of opinions, and not the free exercise of them has in all ages and among all sects produced the danger.

#### OFFICIAL DOCUMENT.

The following State-paper was referred to in the Commercial Report for last month: it was then intended to have been inserted, but want of room prevented it.

*Letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to General Armstrong, Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States of America.*

“Altenburgh, Aug. 22.

“SIR—Being informed that you are about to dispatch a vessel for America, his Majesty has charged me to make known to you the immutable principles which have regulated, and will continue to regulate, his conduct as to the grand point of difference respecting Neutrals.

“France admits the principle, that the flag protects the merchandize. A merchant vessel having a clearance from her Government, ought to be considered as a floating colony. The violation of such a vessel by searches, prosecutions, and other acts of arbitrary power, is a violation of the territory of a colony, and an attack upon the independence of its Government. The seas belong exclusively to no nation; they are the common property of states, the domain of all.

“Merchant vessels of an enemy, being the property of private individuals ought to be respected. Private individuals, who take no share in hostilities, ought not to be made prisoners. In all her conquests France has respected private property. Warehouses and shops have been left in the possession of their owners. They have been permitted to dispose of their merchandize, as they thought proper; and at this moment there are cargoes, particularly of cotton, passing in waggons through the French army, and through Austria and Germany, to proceed to whatever destination commerce may assign them. If France had adopted the practices of maritime warfare, all the merchandize of the Continent would have

been accumulated in France, and often have constituted a source of incalculable wealth.

“Such would undoubtedly have been the assumptions of England, had the English possessed the same superiority by land, which they have at sea. We should, as in the times of barbarism, have seen the vanquished sold as slaves, and their lands divided among the victors. Mercantile cupidity would have engrossed every thing, and the Government of an enlightened nation, that has carried the arts of civilization to the highest pitch of perfection, would have given the first example of renewing the practices of barbarous ages. That Government is well aware of the injustice of its Maritime code. But what does it heed injustice? Its only inquiry is, what is useful.

“When France shall have acquired a naval force proportionate to the extent of her coasts and her population, the Emperor will gradually reduce these principles to practice, and exert himself to procure their general adoption. The right, or rather the assumption, of blockading rivers and coasts, by proclamation, is equally insolent and absurd. No right can possibly spring out of the mere will and caprice of one of the interested parties, but must originate in the actual nature of the things to which it belongs. No place is properly in a state of blockade, but when it is invested by land and by water. It is put under blockade, to cut off all means of assistance by which the surrender may be retarded; and in this case only accrues the right of preventing neutral ships from entering it; because, the place so attacked is in danger of being taken, and the dominion of it is undecided, and still in dispute, between the commander of the town and those who blockade or invest it: and from this arises the right of prohibiting neutrals from entering the place.

“The sovereignty and independence of the flag, like the sovereignty and independence of a territory, is the property of all neutrals. A state may surrender itself to another, divest itself of its independence, and undergo a change of Sovereigns; but the rights of sovereignty are indivisible and unalienable; the smallest particle of them cannot be ceded.

“England proclaimed France in a state of blockade. The Emperor, by his decree of Berlin declared the British Islands to be in a state of blockade. The former measure excludes neutral vessels from France, the latter prohibits them from going to England.